

United States Arsenal Building  
(Now Porter Academy Officers' Dwellings)  
167 Ashley Avenue (Ashley Avenue, Bec,  
Doughty and President Streets)  
Charleston  
Charleston County  
South Carolina

HABS No. SC-295

HABS  
SC  
10-CHAR,  
183B-

PHOTOGRAPH  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. SC-295

UNITED STATES ARSENAL BUILDING  
(NOW PORTER ACADEMY OFFICERS' DWELLINGS)HABS  
SC  
10-CHAB  
1738-

Address: 167 Ashley Avenue (Ashley Avenue, Bee, Doughty and President Streets), Charleston, Charleston County, South Carolina.

Present Owner: Medical College of South Carolina, 16 Lucas Street, Charleston, South Carolina.

Present Occupant: Porter Academy.

Present Use: Residential.

Brief Statement of Significance: A mid-19th century building probably used to house officials of the United States Arsenal.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Government; granted to trustees of the Holy Communion Church Institute by joint resolution of Congress December 19, 1879. Name changed to Porter Academy in 1886.  
Sold to Medical College of South Carolina August 30, 1963.
- B. Date of Erection: About 1844
- C. Architect: Probably Edward Brickell White
- D. Notes on Known Alterations and Additions: Present central stairs appear to be an addition, probably late 19th C. More recent alterations include plumbing, and enclosure of the east end of the second-floor piazza. The physical history of alterations is by no means clear; the quality of construction makes it probable that most of the building was erected by the United States Government, and that alterations were of a minor nature.
- E. Sources of Information: A. Toomer Porter, Led On (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898).  
News and Courier, Charleston, South Carolina, August 31, 1963.  
Ravenel, Architects of Charleston (Charleston: Carolina Art Ass'n., 1945).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: One of a pair of residential buildings accessory to the United States Arsenal group.
2. Condition of fabric: Sound.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories, number of bays, over-all dimensions, layout: Two stories, 2 x 7 bays, about 20' x 66', excluding piazza, rectangular with projecting piazza.
2. Foundations: very low.
3. Wall construction: Red brick, American bond (headers every fourth course); pilaster strips on corners.
4. Structural system: Exterior brick bearing walls, frame partitions and floor system.
5. Porches: Five-bay double-tiered wooden piazza on south side, with Doric columns above Tuscan columns; the lower order is on stucco pedestals. Tapered pilasters are behind the end columns. At the second-floor level, two bays at the east end have been enclosed.
6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys are placed symmetrically on the ridge, at the interior. They are not hooded, as are most Charleston chimneys of the 19th century.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: A central doorway has a door with four molded panels, over which is a glazed rectangular transom. Other openings contain French doors and modern doors.
  - b. Windows: Windows under piazza extend to the floor; others have granite sills. Lintels are granite. Double-hung sash, twelve-over-twelve lights.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Hip roof covered with slate.
  - b. Cornice: Granite, molded with straight (inclined) profiles. These appear identical with cornices on the United States Arsenal Main Building.

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C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: This building is divided into two dwelling units by a transverse center partition. The east half is described here.  
First floor: An entrance and stair hall is at the west (interior) end, then a main room extending the full depth of the plan, and at the east end is a larger room across the south and two smaller ones at the north. A piazza is at the south side of the hall and main room. The second floor layout is similar. Ceiling heights are about 14' and 12'.
2. Stairways: Open well, open string, 24 risers. A landing cuts across a window on the north wall. There is a large turned newel, round handrail, and turned balusters.
3. Flooring: Longleaf yellow pine boards, 4-1/2" wide.
4. Ceiling and wall finish: Ceiling--one second-floor room is ceiled with boards, which appears to typify an earlier state. The remainder are plastered, with a plaster cornice. The vestibule has a foliated plaster centerpiece. Walls--plaster, painted. At an unknown date, wooden beads were applied to the walls of the main room to form panels.
5. Doors: Doors have four molded panels.
6. Decorative features and trim: Paneled wooden trim with paneled corner blocks. Soffits and reveals of window openings are paneled in wood, painted. Rooms have a high molded base.
7. Notable hardware: Decorative cast-iron railing on second-floor piazza. Doors are (each) hung on two cast-iron butts.
8. Heating: Original heating was by fireplaces. Typical mantels are of marble, of simple design; fireplaces have marble hearths and cast-iron fire fronts. Chimney breasts project.

- D. Site: This building (faces south) and a similar one face each other across the axis of the main United States Arsenal building, about 200' apart, a short distance west of it.

Prepared by Harley J. McKee, Architect  
National Park Service  
August 1963